There are two obstacles to effective communication that challenge every leader:
1. Penetrating information overload
2. Providing messages that are easy to digest and remember

**Storytelling addresses both**

Research demonstrates that a different part of our brain is activated by a good story. Think about how relaxing it is to binge watch your favorite television show at the end of a long day. That’s because it’s fun to get involved in a story – not work! This is exactly why leaders learn how to communicate in stories.

**People remember stories**

When all the facts and figures have disappeared from your brain like a PowerPoint presentation when the projector is switched off, the stories remain! Especially the juicy ones! We cannot wait to tell another when we have heard a good story. You can harness this to communicate your organization’s value and impact.

To do this you first need to identify your organization’s Master Story, the overarching narrative that pulls together who you are and what you are doing for all of your key stakeholder audiences. It’s not a difficult exercise. Your mission and vision likely have the details, and you know it intuitively if you are the CEO because you talk about it all day long. But… you must write it down and begin to use it as an organizational tool to get the value it can provide you.
The core practices of leadership storytelling
1. Learn how to tell a bare bones story. 
   *This allows the listener to fill in their own details.*
2. Pick a main character everyone can relate to.
   *Stories are about people, and people you understand.*
3. Tell stories that are enticing.
   *Everyone wants a good story. Make yours worth the listening.*
4. Pick stories that drive home your message.
   *People will remember it. Make sure it’s worth remembering!*

Isolate and highlight the value you add and the impact you create.
1. Get these clear in advance.
   *Know what is important to you and your organization.*
2. Choose personal stories that hit these points home.
   *Pick stories that deliver your points.*
3. Create short stories that can be delivered face-to-face.
   *Tell a story where you can get to the point in less than 3 minutes.*

Develop your process for collecting and disseminating stories that support your Master Story.
1. Know who is delivering fuel to your story engine.
   *This includes volunteers and staff who regularly interface with members and partners.*
2. Know who is crafting the stories.
   *Most often it is your marketing communication lead or someone who reports to them.*
3. Deliver all stories on multiple channels.
   *Include social media, newsletters, behind the podium and in informal conversations.*

Seth Kahan has been teaching storytelling to leaders since 1996 when he helped lead a series of think tanks that included Disney, Hewlett Packard, the World Bank and Kodak Chemical. He has taught master storytelling classes to NASA, US Geological Survey, CIA, World Bank Institute, FEMA and others. He taught this material to the International Sign Association, which went on to receive a Power of A award for their achievements using storytelling in advocacy. He can be reached at Seth@VisionaryLeadership.com.